

Message Text

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SUBJ: SAUDI PRESS EDITORIAL

1. FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE ARAB NEWS, ONE OF TWO
JIDDA ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS, ON NOVEMBER 28, BEGIN TEXT:

2. "ARAB RANKS.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT HAS REACHED AN UNPRECEDENTED
CROSSROADS. THERE ARE MANY ROADS BRANCHING OUT FROM THIS PAR
TICULAR POINT IN TIME, MOST OF THEM FRAUGHT WITH PERIL AND
SOME LEADING TO DISASTER. THE AMERICANS HAVE LOST THE INITIATIVE
IN THE PEACE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, THE EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS
ARE ATTEMPTING TO BEGIN A DIALOGUE LEADING TO A SETTLEMENT AND
THE ARAB WORLD IS DIVIDED INTO THREE CAMPS-- THE SUPPORTERS OF
SADAT, THE REJECTIONISTS, AND THE UNDECIDED. PEACE HAS
BECOME LITTLE MORE THAN A SHIMMERING MIRAGE--WITHIN OUR GRASP
ONE MOMENT AND GONE THE NEXT.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE DRAMATIC CHANGES THAT HAVE SWEEPED THE
MIDDLE EAST OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAVE TRANSFORMED THE PEACE
PROCESS FROM A STEADY PROGRESSION TO AN ALL-OR-NOTHING PROPO-
SITION. DEPENDING ON WHO IS DOING THE TALKING, THE SPRING OF
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1978 WILL BRING PERMANENT PEACE OR A CATASTROPHIC WAR. MUCH
DEPENDS, OF COURSE, UPON WHETHER ISRAEL WILL MAKE SERIOUS CON-
CESSIONS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT-- IN ESSENCE, THE SURRENDER OF THE
OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THSWILLINGNESS TO LIVE SIDE-BY-SIDE
WITH PALESTINIAN STATE. THE SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS BELIEVE
PRESIDENT SADAT MADE A SERIOUS MISTAKE BY OPENING DIRECT CON-
TACTS WITH ISRAEL; THEY FEEL THE ISRAELIS WILL EXPLOIT

THESE CONTACTS TO THEIR ADVANTAGE, AND WILL ULTIMATELY REFUSE TO BUDGE FROM THE HARDLINE STANCE OF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT SADAT, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS CONVINCED HE HAS BROKEN THE ICE, AND THE ISRAELI WILL AGREE TO SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSION NOW IT HAS AN INDICATION OF ARAB SINCERITY WITH REGARD TO A FINAL SETTLEMENT. WHO IS RIGHT AND WHO IS WRONG? GIVEN THE VARIABLES INVOLVED, PERHAPS ONLY HISTORY WILL TELL. BUT THE ONE CLEAR REALITY THAT HAS EMERGED FROM THIS RUSH OF EVENTS IS THAT THE ARAB WORLD IS BITTERLY DIVIDED, AND AS LONG AS THIS REMAINS THE CASE, TRUE PEACE IS IMPOSSIBLE. THERE HAVE BEEN ERRORS OF JUDGMENT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ARAB DISPUTE, ERRORS WHICH MUST BE CORRECTED BY CONSULTATIONS AMONG THE

VARIOUS PARTIES CONCERNED. IF PRESIDENT SADAT HAS BEEN TOO IMPULSIVE IN STRIKING OUT ON HIS OWN, HE SHOULD RETRENCH AND SEEK THE ADVICE OF HIS ARAB BROTHERS. IF THE SYRIANS HAVE BEEN TOO RIGID IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE EGYPTIAN LEADER'S MOVES, THEY SHOULD PONDER THE FACT THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO PROOF THAT MR. SADAT HAS SOUGHT A SEPARATE PEACE. IT IS VITAL THAT MEDIATION EFFORTS BE UNDERTAKEN AT THIS POINT BY ARAB SUPPORT STATES TO COOL THE HEATED TEMPER ON BOTH SIDES AND REBUILD A SOLID ARAB FRONT. WE CAN DEBATE THE MERITS AND DRAWBACKS OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND INFINTUM, BUT THE ONE THING WE CAN SAY FOR CERTAIN IS THAT DIVISION IN ARAB RANKS CAN ONLY LEAD TO DEFEAT-- BE IT AT THE BARGAINING TABLE OR ON THE BATTLEFIELD. END TEXT.

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